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GENERAL SECRETARY MIKHAIL GORBACHEV AND THE SOVIET MILITARY: ASSESSING HIS IMPACT AND THE POTENTIAL FOR FUTURE CHANGES

THE DEFENSE POLICY PANEL
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COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES
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PREFACE

During the second session of the 100th Congress, the Defense Policy Panel conducted hearings on July 12-14, 1988 on the impact that General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev's reforms have had upon the Soviet military and the implications for U.S. national security. Testimony was solicited from the Intelligence Agencies and non-governmental Soviet experts. The witnesses included: Robert M. Gates, Deputy Director of Central Intelligence; Lt. General Leonard H. Perroots, Director, Defense Intelligence Agency; Curtis W. Kamman, Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary for Intelligence and Research, State Department; Edward L. Warner III, Senior Defense Analyst, the RAND Corporation; Phillip A. Karber, Vice President, BDM International, Inc.; Jack Snyder, Associate Professor of Political Science, Columbia University; and Stephen Meyer, Associate Professor of Political Science, Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

INTRODUCTION

The role of the military is clearly critical to Gorbachev's effort to restructure the Soviet system. Gorbachev must have the support of the military to pursue his arms control objectives and implement "new thinking" in foreign policy. He must also reduce the burden of defense expenditures on the Soviet economy for perestroika (restructuring) to succeed fully.

The growing debate over military doctrine, as well as Gorbachev's reshuffling of the Soviet military leadership, demonstrates the General Secretary's determination to extend his reform campaign to the military. The unprecedented visit to the United States in early July by the Chief of the Soviet General Staff, Marshall Sergei Akhromeyev, also points up the importance that the evolving relationship between Gorbachev and the military will have for the security of the United States and its Allies.

Telling the difference between what the Soviets say they will do and what they actually do wasn't too difficult in the past because of the large gap between Soviet propaganda and the reality of Soviet military power. Now, however, it will be necessary to discriminate between Gorbachev's seemingly sincere efforts to restructure the Soviet military and the imperfect realization of those efforts.

The Defense Policy panel asked witnesses to address two general questions:

What, if any, have been the concrete and operational manifestations in Soviet military behavior that might be attributable to Gorbachev's reform campaign?

Secondly, what kinds of operational changes in Soviet military behavior would convincingly demonstrate that Gorbachev's reforms had taken hold in the Soviet military?

This report will also address these two issues in an effort to establish reasonable benchmarks for evaluating Gorbachev's success in reforming the military and assessing the opportunities and risks that perestroika in the military poses to the United States.

WHAT GORBACHEV INHERITED

The Brezhnev era is often described as the "golden age" of the military. Brezhnev's personal power depended strongly on institutional support, and the military's loyalty was rewarded with annual four to five percent budgetary increases in the period 1965-75. In April 1973, Defense Minister Andrei Grechko was elevated to full membership in the Politburo, becoming only the second professional military officer to achieve it.

Several witnesses noted that power was diffused or "feudalized" under Brezhnev. Major party and state institutions gained considerable policy control and autonomy in return for their support of Brezhnev's personal reign. As demonstrated by Figure I, provided to the Panel by Phillip Karber of BDM International, the Soviet military took full advantage of the "shower of rubles" and grew substantially.

The Soviet military also developed an offense-oriented, war-fighting strategy at both the nuclear and conventional level. Soviet military doctrine and exercises emphasized the critical importance of seizing the initiative quickly — by preemption in the event of nuclear war and massive blitzkrieg tactics in a conventional conflict. In the eyes of the West, the Brezhnev military grew larger in almost every dimension and deployed its forces in a most threatening manner.

The defense burden proved to be too great even for Brezhnev and his immediate successors. Chronic economic stagnation led Brezhnev to limit the growth rate for defense to about 2 percent during 1977-83. The military, however, became increasingly alarmed over the Western buildup triggered by the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and led by President Reagan. Marshal Nikolai Ogarkov, then Chief of the Soviet General Staff, pushed hard for more resources, but to no avail. He was summarily demoted in September 1984, in part because of his complaints about the end of the "fat cat" era for the Soviet military.

Brezhnev also initiated a shift in military thinking that Gorbachev has accelerated in the current debate over military doctrine. Clearly aimed at influencing incoming President Carter, Brezhnev asserted in January 1977 that the Soviet Union did not seek military superiority and that its military doctrine was "defensive" in nature. Moreover, as Brezhnev and other senior political and military leaders subsequently amplified, nuclear war was unwinnable and any use of nuclear weapons would inevitably lead to a catastrophic all-out nuclear war. Consequently, the Soviet Union pledged that it would not be the first to use nuclear weapons and called on other nuclear powers to follow its lead.

Ted Warner of the RAND Corporation notes, however, that these themes were struck on the political side of military doctrine, not the military-technical or operational side which deals with "concrete measures

Figure 1

GORBACHEV's MILITARY INHERITANCE: THE BREZHNEV MILITARY BUILD-UP 1963-1983

	1963	1983	CHANGE 1963-1983
ACTIVE MILITARY MANPOWER (THOUS)	3,300	4,644	+ 1,344
STRATEGIC OFFENSIVE FORCES			
ICBMs	90	1,398	+ 1,308
SLBMs	107	969	+ 862
ICBM/SLBM Warheads	200	7,727	+ 7,527
Long-Range Bombers	190	145	- 45
Medium-Range Bombers	0	100	+ 100
STRATEGIC DEFENSIVE FORCES			
ABM Launchers	0	32	+ 32
Interceptor Aircraft	4,500	2,500	- 2,000
SAM Launchers	4,800	9,500	+ 4,700
THEATER NUCLEAR FORCES			
MRBM/IRBM Launchers	200	600	+ 400
Other	A Few	8,018	+ 8,000
LAND FORCES			
Army/Ground Forces Manpower	2,250	2,840	+ 590
Army/Ground Forces Divisions	140	190	+ 50
Tanks	35,000	50,000	+ 15,000
AMPHIBIOUS FORCES			
Marine/Naval Inf. Manpower	17	14	+ 13
Marine/Naval Inf. Divisions	0	1	+ 1
Amphibious Lift	0	28	+ 28
TACTICAL AIR FORCES			
Fighter/Attack Aircraft	4,000	4,225	+ 225
Medium-Range Bombers	1,000	575	+ 425
NAVAL FORCES			
Aircraft Carriers	0	5	+ 5
Cruisers	23	36	+ 13
Destroyers	124	64	- 60
Frigates/Corvettes	13	176	+ 163
Attack Submarines	404	280	- 124
Carrier Aircraft	0	60	+ 60
Land-Based Bombers	450	450	----
MOBILITY FORCES			
Airlift	1,065	780	- 285
Sealift	873	1,664	+ 791
EXTERNAL FORCES (Divs. Deployed outside USSR)	26	40	+ 14

Data Adapted from John M. Collins, U.S-Soviet Military Balance 1980-1985, *p. 5.*

to prepare for and, if necessary, conduct military operations in the event of war." The Soviet military apparently drew considerably different lessons from the emergence of nuclear parity. Its strategy for fighting a nuclear war remained the same, but its estimation of the likelihood of nuclear war changed. Soviet writings and exercises on conflict in the European theater no longer assumed automatic escalation from conventional to nuclear war. As a result, the Soviet military refined its operational doctrine for conducting "theater strategic operations," that is, high-speed, large-scale offensive operations aimed at winning a conventional war after repelling an initial enemy attack (in line with the "defensive" nature of Soviet strategy). In keeping with the "offensive" nature of its military-technical doctrine, of course, Soviet force deployments retained their threatening posture.

WHAT IS GORBACHEV'S AGENDA FOR MILITARY REFORM?

Gorbachev moved quickly to reassert civilian control over the military when he came to power in March 1985. The military was conspicuously underrepresented during Chernenko's funeral. Since then, the top leadership has been thoroughly reshuffled, including the departures of 10 of 16 deputy defense ministers, 3 of 5 service chiefs and 8 of 16 military district commanders. Gorbachev also has given his Defense Ministers -- Sergei Sokolov, who was abruptly dismissed after a young West German pilot crossed Soviet territory undetected and landed his Cessna in Red Square, and Dimitri Yazov -- only candidate member status in the Politburo.

Gorbachev's determination to establish party supremacy was clearly reflected in the party program adopted at the 27th Party Congress in February 1986:

> ...the CPSU considers it necessary in the future to strengthen its organizing and directing influence on the life and activities of the Armed Forces.
>
> It is under the Party's guidance that policy in the area of the country's defense and security and Soviet military doctrine, which is purely defensive and directed at defending against an attack from without, are developed and implemented.

In addition, Gorbachev has encouraged civilian defense experts, particularly at the USA-Canada Institute and the International Department of the Central Committee staff, to engage the military in a debate over doctrine. Unlike Brezhnev, he wants competing centers of military analysis and threat assessment.

Virtually all of the witnesses maintained that Gorbachev's reform agenda for the military is driven primarily by domestic concerns, not military or strategic factors. The equation is simple: in order for his economic reforms to succeed, Gorbachev must shift resources from the defense sector to civilian use.

CIA and DIA estimate that defense, which Gorbachev called a "great burden" on the economy in early 1987, consumes between 15 and 17 percent of the Soviet GNP. The United States, in contrast, spends about 6% of its GNP on defense. The defense burden is considerably higher in many critical sectors. For example, about 40 percent of the machine-building and metalworking industries are devoted to defense, yet Gorbachev desperately needs to double the rate of civilian production if he is to modernize the Soviet Union's ancient industrial base.

Phillip Karber noted that the Soviet Union also faces a manpower shortage. The annual draft cohort of available 18 year olds has dropped by about 700,000 (to about 1.8 million) in the last decade and the Slavic areas of the Soviet Union already experience very tight labor markets. More importantly, perhaps, the Soviet economy is chronically short of young, well-educated professionals. It could benefit from reductions in the large Soviet officer corps needed to train and field 5 million men.

While recognizing that Gorbachev is certainly aware of the strategic and foreign policy implications of his reform campaign, the Defense Policy Panel concluded that Gorbachev's personal agenda for military reform is driven primarily by economic concerns. From this perspective, Gorbachev's claim that the Soviet Union will not deploy military forces beyond what is required for a "reasonable, sufficient defense" is aimed as much at his own military as it is at Western audiences.

According to several witnesses, Gorbachev apparently views military doctrine as a means of scaling down the claims of the military upon scarce resources. Gorbachev plans to do this by redefining the Western threat and altering the way the military generates its defense requirements based on the redefined threat. As MIT Professor Stephen Meyer told the Panel,

> Gorbachev's new thinking [on security issues] -- including two of its core principles: reasonable sufficiency and non-provocative defense -- is most certainly not a framework of force analysis concepts or operational criteria. It is not an explicit blueprint for force development. Rather, it is a political tool that is intended to enable the Soviet leader to recapture the Soviet defense agenda.

Thus, the debate over military doctrine should be viewed as a political struggle over who determines "how much is enough" for Soviet security. Gorbachev clearly believes that the military's robust definition, which had been accepted by his predecessors, will deny perestroika the resources it needs to succeed. Asserting party control over military doctrine, therefore, reflects Gorbachev's determination to reduce, by restructuring, the Soviet military establishment.

Gorbachev's arms control policies, according to several witnesses, are inextricably linked to his effort to change military doctrine. A central element of Gorbachev's "new thinking" is that the Western threat can be reduced by political means -- that is, arms control -- which then reduces Soviet defense requirements, even if the latter are still gauged by "old thinking." For Gorbachev, arms control can cut the size of the Western

threat and a revised military doctrine can scale back the military's response to that threat. The result is the same in both cases — a smaller defense burden or, at a minimum, avoiding the costs of a military buildup. Even the latter seems important to Gorbachev, judging from the tenacity of Soviet negotiators in the Defense and Space talks.

At its most fundamental level, the success of Gorbachev's effort to reform, in effect to cut back, the military depends largely on political factors. Is Gorbachev powerful enough to impose his agenda on the military? The decisive factor is probably not Gorbachev's power vis-a-vis the military but Gorbachev's standing among his colleagues on the Politburo.

The military as an institution has clearly lost the clout it enjoyed under Brezhnev. Nevertheless, military complaints over Gorbachev's reform agenda would provide heavy ammo to Gorbachev's conservative opponents, as former Soviet leader Khrushchev discovered in 1964.

So far, as several witnesses noted, there probably is no consensus behind Gorbachev's "new thinking" on security issues. The danger to him would rise sharply if there was a consensus against his reform agenda. That could happen if the results of Gorbachev's "new thinking" on security issues are disappointing. But, as the Panel discovered, it is far too soon to determine what the operational impact of Gorbachev's military reform agenda will actually be, much less whether the return to his reform campaign meets political expectations.

WHAT IMPACT HAS GORBACHEV HAD UPON THE SOVIET MILITARY?

The Defense Policy Panel asked witnesses to identify any concrete and operational changes in military behavior, including procurement, deployment and training practices, that could be attributed to Gorbachev's reform campaign. The answer was unanimous. To date, there have been no significant, identifiable changes traceable to Gorbachev's drive to scale back defense spending. As the RAND Corporation's Ted Warner has observed:

> Despite the varying formulations regarding Soviet military doctrine and the growing pressures on defense spending, the Soviet Union has sustained a steady, across-the-board modernization and expansion of its armed forces over the past ten years. Throughout all five services, in both intercontinental range and regional/theater forces, and with regard to both nuclear and conventional arms, the Soviet Union has relentlessly improved its military capabilities.

In fact, not only has Gorbachev failed to suppress defense spending, but it has actually increased. According to preliminary unclassified intelligence estimates, Soviet military spending grew by about 3 per cent in both 1986 and 1987, almost double the growth rate of the 1981-6 period. Several witnesses attributed this to the current five-year plan, which had been formulated under Brezhnev, and the start-up costs of several big ticket items such as the SS-24 and SS-25 intercontinental ballistic missiles. Nevertheless, the conclusion is inescapable that so far the military's budget has not been nicked by Gorbachev.

A few witnesses suggested that the cumbersomeness of the Soviet defense budgetary process itself explained Gorbachev's lack of impact so far on military spending. Several Soviet spokesmen, reportedly including Marshall Akhmromeyev, have noted that the Soviets themselves do not really know what they spend on defense since the military's budget covers only operations and maintenance. Procurement and research and development monies go to civilian institutions that produce weapons whose prices are arbitrarily set. The ruble price of a tank bears little relationship to what it actually costs and certainly does not indicate the relative value of a tank versus an aircraft or personnel account.

Other witnesses, however, argued convincingly that Soviet budgetary planning is based on resources and inputs utilized -- amount of raw materials, proportion of production lines, etc. -- not rubles. Consequently, the state planning agency (Gosplan) does have a pretty good handle on what is "spent" on defense and could implement changes if ordered. These analysts suggest instead that the Soviet military is still operating on a five-year plan formed under Brezhnev. Gorbachev's impact, if any, will be felt on the next five-year plan that begins in 1991.

So if the Soviet defense budgets and weapons procurements have not been affected by Gorbachev's reforms, what has all the ferment been about? Again, the answer from all the witnesses was unanimous. Gorbachev's initiatives so far have been largely at the broad policy level and, while not penetrating yet to the operational level, could potentially bring real changes in the way the Soviet military does business. Gorbachev appears to have seized the agenda. Now he is at the critical point of trying to force implementation of his policy directions. All agreed that it is too soon to tell if he will succeed. Although witnesses differed over what would be convincing evidence that he had succeeded, most agreed on what he had accomplished so far.

Getting on board with "new thinking." Senior military officials generally supported Gorbachev's economic reform campaign from the beginning. They recognize that perestroika is necessary if the Soviet Union is to remain a first-class power and compete militarily, particularly in high technology weapons, with the West. There were indications, however, that the military might have thought it was exempt from the reform campaign. If so, Gorbachev's reaction to the Cessna debacle ended that illusion. The chief of the Soviet air defense force was summarily retired; others were demoted or reprimanded. Yazov, a relatively junior and newly appointed deputy minister in charge of personnel, replaced Sokolov, the first Minister of Defense not to die in office.

Yazov quickly laid down Gorbachev's markers:

> Generals, admirals, and officers have still not profoundly grasped the essence of perestroika, have not defined their role and place in it, have not made out that they must begin it above all with themselves. They are not themselves serving as examples of how to observe military discipline and the norms of socialist morality, or how to heighten professional qualifications and ideological elan.

Before long, the party line according to Yazov was clear: "Perestroika in the armed forces must be understood as truly revolutionary transformations, the goal of which is to make the army capable of more effectively resolving problems that are new in principle."

Soviet military officers now write of military perestroika, but, as several witnesses observed, the reforms they advocate tend to be limited to personnel changes, improved training and discipline, increased efficiency and the like, not the restructured forces suggested by civilian analysts. As Columbia Professor Jack Snyder told the Panel,

> Reformers within the military are thinking about streamlining the Soviets' musclebound force posture and preparing for a contingency in which the Warsaw Pact might have to fight temporarily on the defensive. Worrying that the civilian leadership may balk at allowing the Soviet military to seize the initiative at the outset of a war, they are thinking more seriously about the possibility that the Pact would have to absorb NATO's offensive, especially its air offensive, before going over to a decisive counterattack. . . .Like the civilians' reform concepts, the ideas of the military reformers require domestic economic reform, but reform of a radically different kind. The arms race in high technology weapons which the military reformers envision would fit not with a market economy and a radically reduced defense burden, but with a less far-reaching administrative reform in which the military sector would continue to enjoy its priority status in a streamlined command economy.

The military's newfound enthusiasm for reform is, according to Professor Meyers, a "classic example of how political discourse inside the Soviet Union is carried out: you use the other guy's words, but you redefine them." This, of course, increases the difficulty of discerning if Gorbachev's reform agenda has taken hold.

Military perestroika appears likely to have considerable impact, but of the "modernizing" rather than "restructuring" variety. BDM International's Phillip Karber notes that the Soviet Union appears to be moving from its current division-regiment-battalion structure to a unified corps-brigade type of organization. This approach, which has been adopted in Hungary and touted there as a model for Soviet forces, could, according to Karber, reduce the number of Soviet divisions by 30% over the next 20 years. This reorganization could, theoretically, maintain the Soviets' force capability while reducing manpower requirements by 3-5 percent. Reform of this type, the Panel notes, holds little prospect for increased Western security.

Arms Control Initiatives. For all witnesses, the most striking example of Gorbachev's "new thinking" in action was his arms control policy. Gorbachev's personal stamp was seen in several areas: the tactical flexibility the Soviets displayed in the INF negotiations, first insisting upon and then dropping its demand on linkage to other issues; acceptance of the principle of asymmetric reductions; willingness to accept intrusive verification, including on-site inspections; and the willingness to experiment with unilateral arms control gambits, such as the Soviet

unilateral nuclear test moratorium of 1986-7. Gorbachev's predecessors might have taken one or two of these steps; only Gorbachev would have done them all, much less forced them upon the Soviet General Staff.

Professor Meyer, in fact, noted the "almost frenetic pace" of Gorbachev's arms control initiatives which was characteristic of a "try and see" strategy:

> Far from being fully implemented, the new thinking is undergoing a trial by fire in a tentative, piecemeal, fashion. While the new thinking is supposed to validate Gorbachev's arms control policy (i.e., resort to political means to enhance security rather than military-technical means), he is simultaneously using his arms control accomplishments to validate the new thinking (by demonstrating its ability to reduce "the threat").

In a sense, Gorbachev is trying to create a new reality -- that is, a reduced threat environment -- through a self-fulfilling policy, namely negotiated arms treaties.

Reduced Reliance on Military Power. Gorbachev was also credited with changing the primacy that Soviet leaders had traditionally given to military power in its arsenal of foreign policy tools. The Soviet Union's withdrawal from Afghanistan, its apparent pressure on Vietnam to start withdrawing from Cambodia and its expressed willingness at the Moscow Summit to work for an Angolan settlement indicated to all of the witnesses that Gorbachev differed considerably from his predecessors in the utility he attached to military power.

Civilian defense specialists have often cited the deployment of SS-20 intermediate range ballistic missiles under Brezhnev as an example of the counterproductive effect of overreliance on military means. Brezhnev's error, it is argued, was his acquiescence in the military's business-as-usual modernization of its aging SS-4's and 5's without recognizing the risk that the "growing Soviet threat" might provoke NATO into a military buildup that jeopardized Soviet security. For these civilian reformers, this is the flip side of arms control policy: Soviet force deployments in excess of "legitimate needs" can be as dangerous to Soviet interests as Western deployments unconstrained by arms control.

Even though Soviet foreign policies appear to reflect a changed calculus about the utility of military force, the Defense Policy Panel shares the cautionary note struck by virtually all the witnesses appearing before it. That is, this trend has not extended very far throughout Soviet foreign policy and, in any case, is easily reversible. Soviet assistance to its client states has not appreciably changed under Gorbachev and its willingness to resolve through negotiation several regional conflicts has yet to be demonstrated. In short, Gorbachev himself appears less enchanted with the utility of military power, but as long as the Soviet's military capability remains unchanged, this is too frail a reed for the prudent Western statesman.

Debate over Military Doctrine. The very existence of a debate over military doctrine between civilian experts and military professionals was frequently cited as evidence of Gorbachev's impact on the military. Many of the doctrinal changes, however, predated Gorbachev and reflect the Soviet leadership's acceptance of the strategic implications of nuclear parity.

Gorbachev and the military now largely agree on the political side of military doctrine. Both espouse the same general themes: Soviet military doctrine is defensive in nature; the Soviet Union seeks only parity, not military superiority; nuclear war is unwinnable; and the Soviet Union rejects preemptive strategies and pledges no-first-use of nuclear weapons.

Civilian experts and military officers, however, appear to differ on the meaning of "reasonable sufficiency." Soviet civilian reformers argue that military forces should be capable of carrying out only defensive tasks, not large offensive operations. The military, in contrast, tends to speak of "defense sufficiency" which, as Akhromeyev has said, should be determined by the "level of the threat." This, of course, is defined in a robust manner. He describes NATO as "preparing for an extended conventional war using new systems of armaments," ready to launch a "surprise attack" and "massive military operations" swiftly "extended throughout the depth of Soviet territory and that of its allies." Obviously, a threat this large would justify a larger force structure than Gorbachev has in mind.

Civilian and military officials, however, appear to think alike at the political level for strategic nuclear forces. In a convergence that began in 1977 under Brezhnev, all now forswear any intention to achieve nuclear superiority, insist that any use of nuclear weapons inevitably leads to catastrophic all-out nuclear war, and deny that nuclear war could ever be a rational continuation of politics. These broader considerations, in turn, provide the basis for the Soviet Union's pledge not to use nuclear weapons first.

Marshall Akhromeyev's active support for Gorbachev's arms control initiatives suggests that the military now views the likelihood of nuclear war in much the same way as civilian leaders. Although Soviet planning for fighting a nuclear war has an offensive cast -- namely a heavy emphasis upon preemptive, counterforce attacks -- the predominant theme is avoiding nuclear war through deterrence, both in peacetime and during a conventional war. The military's willingness to support deep reductions to equal levels and intrusive verification regimes reflects, in the view of most observers, their acceptance of the impact of nuclear parity on the role of nuclear weapons in a future conflict. The military undoubtedly does not buy Gorbachev's expressed enthusiasm for ridding the world of nuclear weapons, but short of that, there seems to be no significant differences on strategic issues.

Clear differences do exist at the operational level for conventional forces, which consume about two thirds of Soviet outlays for equipment, construction and operating costs. The civilian specialists have not spelled out how they would implement "non-offensive (or non-provocative or defensive) defense," in part because they do not have access to military

data. It is also probably the case that it is easier for outside experts to analyze strategic nuclear issues than conventional ones. So the civilian reformers argue that a non-provocative force should not be capable of large-scale offensive operations but instead be limited to "defensive tasks." They do not, however, describe precisely what these "tasks" are and what level and types of forces are "reasonably sufficient" to accomplish them.

Military professionals, on the other hand, are more explicit. For Akhromeyev, the best defense is a good counteroffense: any aggression will invite "crushing retaliatory blows" delivered with "maximum decisiveness and activity." During his U.S. visit, Akhromeyev argued that the Warsaw Pact had to mount a "retaliatory defense," that is, be prepared to repulse enemy attacks and undertake retaliatory actions.

Shortly after becoming Defense Minister, Yazov wrote that "it is impossible to rout an aggressor with defense alone." He added:

> After an attack has been repelled, the troops and naval forces must be able to conduct a decisive offensive. The switch will be in the form of a counteroffensive.

This emphasis on seizing the initiative is clearly reflected in Soviet military-technical doctrine for "theater strategic operations." The major components of a Soviet-style theater war -- initial ground and antiair defense, armor-heavy blitzkrieg counteroffense, air attack against enemy's air capabilities, assault landings on critical rear facilities, and so on -- often appear in Soviet/Warsaw Pact exercises. And, as the Defense Policy Panel noted earlier, the Soviet Union continues the across-the-board modernization of its armed forces that is necessary to sustain this offensive strategy for fighting a conventional war.

More "defensive" exercises? Several Soviet analysts have suggested that the Soviet Union may be moving towards a more defensive posture because of the significant growth in the portion of Warsaw Pact exercises dedicated to defense. Phillip Karber of BDM International claimed that the amount of time spent on defensive maneuver had approximately doubled and was now close to 50 percent. Other witnesses also reported a similar increase, but not quite as large.

Despite Akhromeyev's recent injunction to U.S. officials that they should "watch our exercises" for signs of a more defensive orientation, few witnesses drew that conclusion from the recent trend in Soviet exercise play. Karber noted, for example, that during a recent exercise half of the Warsaw Pact front was in a defensive formation and the other half was trying to encircle the opposing force. For Karber and several others appearing before the Panel, the increased attention to defensive play simply reflected the Soviet military's rational response to improving NATO capabilities during the 1980s.

This is not to say that changing exercise patterns is not important. Little or no defensive play suggests a total preoccupation with offense or, at best, preemption; little or no offensive play, along the lines of Switzerland's "territorial defense," suggests a preoccupation with defense. A mixture of offensive and defensive operations -- as in recent Warsaw Pact exercises and in NATO exercises for some time -- sends an ambiguous message. One side's counteroffensive looks suspiciously like a preemptive first strike to the other side. And since most military professionals on both sides still appear to believe that the best defense is a good offense, "watching" each other's exercises will never be conclusive in itself.

Declining Readiness? A few witnesses suggested that the declining readiness of Soviet forces in Europe might suggest movement toward a more defensive strategy since the Soviets would be less prepared for a bolt-out-of-the-blue offensive. Phillip Karber, for example, believes that Soviet forces are now manned at about 80 percent of wartime strength, a drop of 10-15 percent or so from the 1970s.

Other witnesses, however, pointed out that the number of Soviet troops deployed in Europe had not actually declined. Rather, the Soviet Union, as part of its on-going modernization efforts, had added more equipment and logistical support in creating a larger wartime force. Manpower remained relatively constant, authorized warfighting capability increased and peacetime readiness declined. The Defense Policy Panel agreed that it was difficult to extrapolate a more defensive orientation from readiness trends.

Summary. The answer to the Defense Policy Panel's first question -- Has Gorbachev caused any concrete, operational changes in Soviet military behavior? -- appears to be no. Gorbachev seems to have had no impact yet on Soviet military procurement policies. Some changes in deployment and training practices have occurred, but not in ways significantly different from what would be expected as Soviet military-technical doctrine evolves.

Gorbachev, however, has changed the terms of debate. He has introduced a doctrinal justification for a reduced Soviet military establishment and actively pursued arms control initiatives intended to validate his new doctrine. The Soviet military, for its part, has been forced to justify its resource claims in the new language of "sufficiency" and "defense." To date, the military has resisted significant operational changes because Gorbachev's arms control policies, to date, have not significantly reduced the "Western threat."

This struggle over national priorities is far from over, as Gorbachev is continuing to press hard on the arms control front. During the month of July, for example, Gorbachev proposed a new four-stage approach to conventional arms control, called for a Pan-European Reykjavik-like Summit and floated an extremely intrusive verification regime for cruise missiles. Continued success in the arms control arena could lay the basis for significant operational changes in the Soviet military. Defining what a "significant" change is, however, is not a simple proposition, as the Defense Policy Panel discovered.

WHAT ARE THE INDICATORS OF SIGNIFICANT MILITARY REFORM?

Determining whether significant operational changes in Soviet military practices have occurred is likely to remain a difficult analytic task. Despite all the claims of glasnost, it is clear that Gorbachev has not eliminated the gap between what the Soviets sometimes say and what they actually do, especially in the area of security issues. For example, the Washington Post reported that the Soviet Union's top weapons procurement officer, Army Gen. Vitaly Shabanov, claimed on July 26, 1988, that Soviet military spending had declined in recent years in line with its new "defensive" strategy. Yet, as the Intelligence Agencies testified, their preliminary unclassified estimates indicate precisely the opposite. Soviet military spending appears to have increased by about 3% in the last two years.

In addition, it is often difficult to ascertain what the implications of an allegedly "defensive" force adjustment really are. As discussed earlier, increased defensive play during exercises may only reflect a greater appreciation of the opponent's capabilities, not a shift in strategic orientation. A reduction in deployed manpower may represent a reduced threat or could be the product of a personnel reorganization aimed at creating a "leaner and meaner" force. Even a Soviet shift away from its admittedly excessive numbers of tanks -- long the "Queen" of the Soviet Army -- may not mean a shift from an "offensive" strategy, but only a recognition that other factors, such as readiness or high technology weapons, are more important in fighting a modern conventional war.

The analytic difficulty of determining indications of significant military reform was all too evident in the responses to the Defense Policy Panel inquiry. Phillip Karber of BDM International said that he would believe that the Soviets were "really serious" about moving towards a defensive orientation when he saw half their forces (about 13 divisions) leaving Eastern Europe. He also stated that the only "true test" of their sincerity was the "physical restructuring" of their forces. Even these seemingly rigorous standards might not be sufficient for Mr. Karber, who later stated:

> If they [the Soviets] cut the Army in half but kept the forward forces in Central Europe backed up by a reasonable reserve that they have in the Western military districts, they would still pose a significant offensive threat to Central Europe, whether they had a defensive doctrine [or not]. . . . As long as they keep a strong force in Central Europe, I think they will always be tempted to say we look [like] easier prey in a crisis if they preempt while we are getting ready rather than taking a blow from us or waiting until we were fully prepared or ready.

Other witnesses suggested several unilateral measures -- withdrawing two armies from the Central Front, a freeze on defense spending or a 25% reduction in Soviet armed forces -- that would suggest to them that a real shift had occurred. Columbia Professor Jack Snyder, however, would be convinced if the Soviet Union introduced true market reforms into the economy that ended the military's priority claim to resources.

Underlying this apparent analytic confusion may be a fundamental disagreement about what a defensively-oriented force structure might actually look like. RAND Corporation's Ted Warner argues that the "real proof" of the Soviets' adoption of a defensive strategy would be "reduction and restructuring of a serious nature." He does not, however, define what actions would be "serious." Mr. Karber is not even convinced "there is such a thing as a defensive design force structure" because it is not so much the attacker's capabilities, but rather his ability to use decisively what he has, that determines the course of the battle.

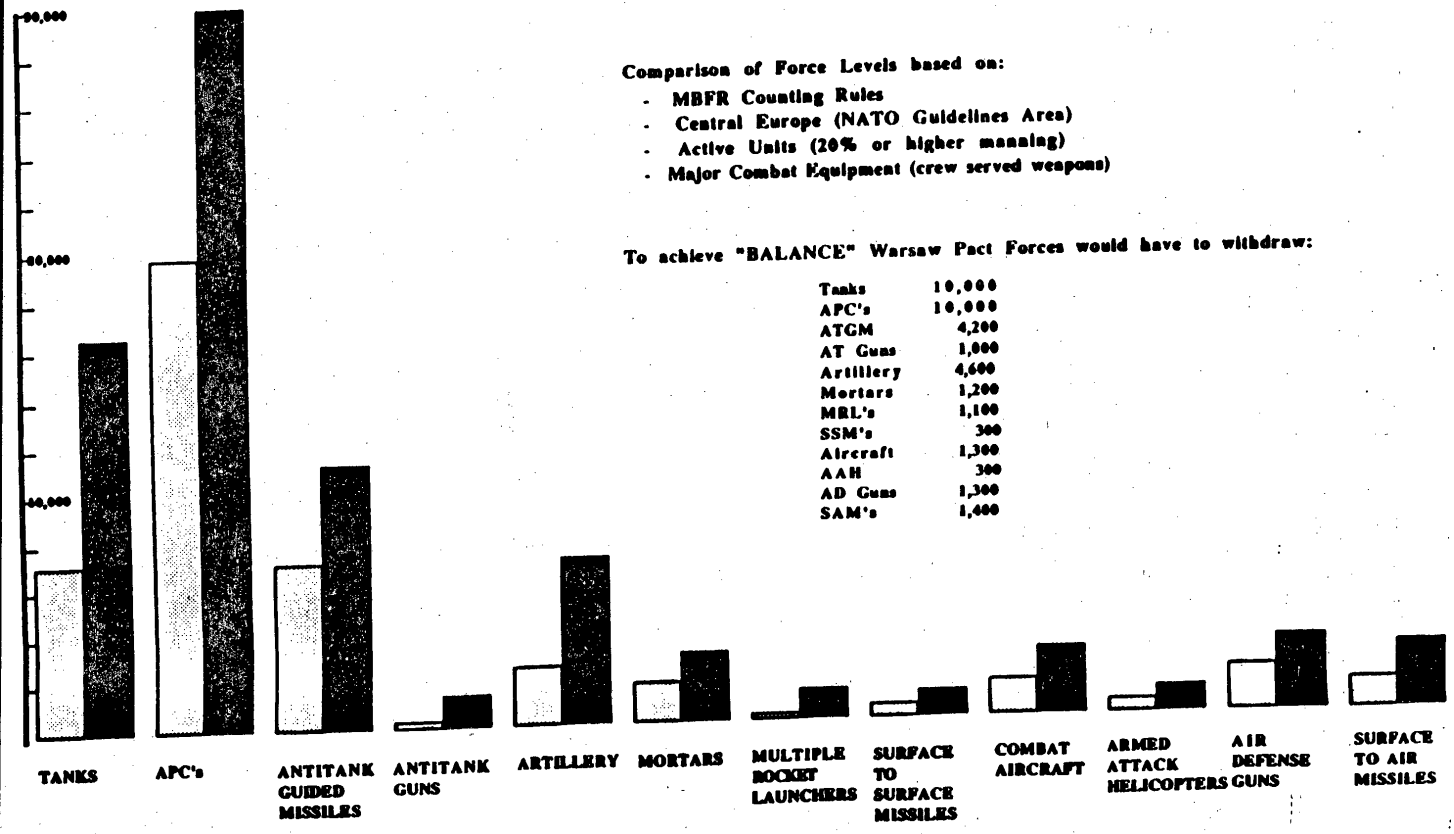
Nevertheless, most of the witnesses seem to believe that some, as yet undefined, combination of reduction and restructuring measures could reliably indicate that the Soviet Union had indeed put into effect Gorbachev's injunction to deploy only those forces sufficient to mount an effective defense. While recognizing that Soviet watchers must develop more precise and specific indicators, the Defense Policy Panel concluded that movement in the following areas would provide reasonable tests of Soviet intentions.

Conventional Arms Control. Several witnesses argued that the West needed to test the seriousness of Gorbachev's initiatives through arms control, much as they were in the INF and START negotiations. In most cases, however, it was not the seriousness of Gorbachev's intentions that was in question; rather, it was the ability of the United States and its Allies to engage the Soviet Union. Phillip Karber, for example, argued that it bordered on an "alliance disgrace" that the "West has not met its own mandate two years ago for bold new initiatives to the East on conventional arms control." Even those who called for a concrete arms control proposal from the Soviets that detailed asymmetric reductions to equal forces recognized that the Soviet Union appeared far ahead of the United States in preparing for serious talks on conventional arms control.

Unilateral Force Reductions. As mentioned earlier, a few witnesses believed that only large, unilateral force reductions by the Soviet Union could convince them that the Soviet Union was in fact moving towards a defensive posture. In addition, some demands that the United States test the Soviets through arms control appeared, on closer examination, to be barely disguised demands that the Warsaw Pact "negotiate" its forces down to current NATO levels. As Figure 2 (provided by Phillip Karber of BDM International) indicates, the existing force asymmetries are large and numerous. Moreover, many Western military analysts believe that NATO's forces are barely sufficient to perform their current mission. Thus, their challenges to the Soviet Union to reduce Pact levels to equal ceilings look much like -- from the Soviet perspective -- a demand for unilateral reductions.

Virtually all of the witnesses noted that senior Soviet military officials, while accepting the need for asymmetrical reductions, have repeatedly stated their opposition to unilateral moves by the Soviet Union. During his recent visit, Marshal Akromeyev told American audiences that large-scale cuts and restructuring must be undertaken on a mutual and

CENTRAL REGION IMBALANCE WILL REQUIRE LARGE ASYMMETRICAL CUTS IN SOVIET/WARSAW PACT CONVENTIONAL FORCES



Comparison of Force Levels based on:

- MBFR Counting Rules
- Central Europe (NATO Guidelines Area)
- Active Units (20% or higher manning)
- Major Combat Equipment (crew served weapons)

To achieve "BALANCE" Warsaw Pact Forces would have to withdraw:

Tanks	10,000
APC's	10,000
ATGM	4,200
AT Guns	1,000
Artillery	4,600
Mortars	1,200
MRL's	1,100
SSM's	300
Aircraft	1,300
AAH	300
AD Guns	1,300
SAM's	1,600

Figure 2

reciprocal basis. General Shabanov told the Washington Post on July 26, 1988: "There's one point I want to emphasize most emphatically. This effort [to reduce spending on offensive weapons] cannot be unilateral."

Several witnesses also believed that Gorbachev was not politically capable of making deep unilateral cuts, citing the political demise of former Soviet leader Khrushchev as an inhibiting precedent for Gorbachev. Khrushchev, determined to free up resources by adopting a nuclear-dependent strategy ("More Bang for the Ruble"), cut the size of the Soviet military by almost 40% (almost 2 million men) and demobilized 36 out of 175 divisions. Charges that Khrushchev was jeopardizing Soviet security figured prominently in later Soviet accounts of his ouster by Brezhnev. The latter, of course, presided over the "golden era" of the Soviet military.

A few witnesses seem attracted to the notion that anything the Soviet Union might do unilaterally -- such as the rumoured withdrawal of two divisions from Hungary -- was almost by definition not militarily significant. If it were militarily significant, the argument went, Gorbachev would not have had the political clout to implement it without reciprocal actions from the West. Others, however, pointed out several possible actions, including thinning out Soviet forces in the Eastern theater and slowing down the modernization of strategic air defenses, that Gorbachev could take that would produce real savings but not affect the military balance in Central Europe.

Unilateral moves of this nature would demonstrate that Gorbachev's reform agenda was taking hold and that he was capable of dealing seriously in conventional arms control talks. Deep, unilateral cuts in the face of NATO's not-inconsiderable forces are probably too risky for Gorbachev. Forcing the military to trim its "excess fat" in less important areas probably is not. Yet the latter could set the stage for more significant actions later on.

Restructuring. While far from agreement on what actually would constitute a "defensive" force structure, most witnesses believed that the Soviet Union could reconfigure or "restructure" its forces to make them less "offensive" and therefore less threatening. For example, Professor Snyder's model would envision each side trying to:

> ...re-create the World War I stalemate...by emphasizing in one's force posture barriers and fortifications, by not having sufficient armor and heavy artillery to break through those barriers and fortifications, and finally by having air power that was slanted in the direction of air defense and slanted away from the direction of deep-strike, ground-attack aircraft that would have an incentive to preempt, for example, against the air bases and command and control of the opponent.

Other suggestions along these lines included repositioning logistical stockpiles to the rear, reducing manning levels of front-line troops, removing bridging equipment and tactical pipelines from weapons inventories, and even pulling back forces from the immediate border area.

The same pressures that make deep unilateral cuts unlikely also appear to work against any significant unilateral restructuring by the Soviet Union. NATO's forces also reflect the "best-defense-is-a-good-offense" philosophy. The Soviet military undoubtedly would resist moving towards a defensive strategy while NATO forces retain their current configuration. Defining a defensive force structure is difficult enough. Expecting one side to adopt it while the other does not is setting a standard that probably cannot be met by either side.

It must also be kept in mind that restructuring is no over-night matter. Professor Meyer observed that:

> ...changes in Soviet army operations are implemented over a very long time-line. Tactical and operational innovations are first tested by units in interior military districts. The results are evaluated and modifications are subjected to further study and testing. Once changes have been approved it takes many years to rework manuals and bring all the forces into line (keep in mind that the sheer mass of Soviet ground forces represents a tremendous amount of inertia.) Thus, it is unreasonable to expect to see any major program or operational impact after only a few years of "new thinking."

In short, changing the way the Soviet military really does business is a long-time process. Not only can short-term fixes, such as increased defensive play in command exercises, be easily reversed, they also may represent simply modernization programs, not shifts in basic orientation or philosophy.

CONCLUSIONS

In sum, the Defense Policy Panel concludes:

1. Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev's reform agenda for the Soviet military appears genuine and has potentially significant implications for the security of the United States and its Allies. Economic concerns, namely the need to shift resources from defense to civilian use, appear to be driving Gorbachev's efforts to move the Soviet military towards a smaller, more defensively oriented force structure.

2. Gorbachev, however, does not appear to have caused any concrete, operational changes in Soviet military behavior. Military procurement policies have not been affected, and while there have been some changes in deployment and training practices, they have not been significantly different from what would be expected from evolving military-technical doctrine.

3. Gorbachev's "new thinking" on security issues has had an impact on Soviet military doctrine at the broad socio-political level, particularly with respect to strategic nuclear issues. It has only set the scene, however, for possible changes in operational doctrine for conventional forces. It is the latter, of course, that consume the bulk of Soviet military outlays and represent the most significant source for resource reallocation.

4. Gorbachev's principal tool for changing Soviet military policy at the operational level has been arms control policy. Gorbachev has used the recent ferment over Soviet military doctrine to introduce a doctrinal and political rationalization for reducing and restructuring the huge Soviet military establishment. Now he is at the critical point of trying to force implementation of his policy directions. For this effort, Gorbachev appears to view arms control as necessary to redefine the Western threat from which Soviet military requirements are generated.

5. The INF Treaty and progress in START reflect an emerging consensus among Soviet political and military leaders on the implications of nuclear parity for Soviet security. Gorbachev and the Soviet military, however, remain divided about "how much is enough" with respect to conventional forces. Furthermore, the political risks to Gorbachev of imposing deep unilateral cuts in Soviet forces appear too high to permit any unilateral moves that would either free up significant resources for economic reform or significantly reduce the military threat to NATO.

6. Gorbachev's recent statements suggest that he is likely to intensify his public campaign on the arms control front. An inadequate or ill-prepared response from the West runs the risk of either reaching a poor agreement or missing the opportunity to conclude a good agreement. The Defense Policy Panel plans to examine the substance of Gorbachev's recent initiatives, as well as the U.S. response, in subsequent hearings.

DISSENTING VIEWS OF REPRESENTATIVES

DICKINSON, SPENCE, BADHAM, STUMP, D. MARTIN

KASICH, BATEMAN, SWEENEY, ROWLAND, WELDON AND J. DAVIS

Although this report is primarily concerned with Gorbachev's reforms and Soviet conventional forces, it nevertheless draws conclusions concerning Soviet nuclear doctrine that are not supported by empirical evidence. Much of the on-going discussion of possible Soviet conventional doctrinal changes -- i.e., "sufficiency" and "defensive defense" -- is apparently predicated on the assumption that Soviet attitudes towards nuclear superiority and nuclear warfighting have changed and become more benign. While the exact linkage between Soviet nuclear and conventional doctrine remains open to speculation in the West, the assumption that Soviet nuclear doctrine has become more benign would seem to be critical if discussion of, and debate over, changes in Soviet conventional force doctrine is to be taken seriously. On the other hand, if Soviet nuclear doctrine has not changed and continues to emphasize superiority and warfighting, it is difficult to put much faith in the argument that either Gorbachev or the Soviet military are seriously considering a major transformation in conventional doctrine and force structure. At present, there is little concrete indication that Soviet leadership attitudes towards nuclear doctrine have moderated during the last decade.

This report accepts, without the slightest qualification, the idea that the Soviet leadership has accepted the implications of nuclear parity -- implicitly meaning that the Soviets reject the concepts of superiority, preemption, first use and victory. The apparent justification underlying this assumption appears to be a decade of both Soviet public statements and Soviet arms control activities. However, neither can be taken at face value as evidence of a meaningful transformation in Soviet nuclear doctrine.

Soviet leaders have long used public statements announcing doctrinal "changes" as a tool to influence Western public opinion. Brezhnev's 1977 "Tula" speech rejecting superiority and nuclear warfighting followed, by only weeks, the "B Team" review of U.S. intelligence estimates that concluded that the Soviets were, in fact, actively seeking nuclear superiority. Soviet spokesmen publicly rejected the concept of nuclear preemption in 1979 at the same time that the Senate was considering the SALT II Treaty. In 1981, Brezhnev rejected the concept of victory in a nuclear war. This pronouncement coincided with the new Reagan administration's expressed determination to modernize the U.S. nuclear triad. Finally, in 1982, Soviet leaders publicly rejected the first use of nuclear weapons at the same time that the nuclear freeze movement was popular in the West and NATO decisions on deployment of INF were pending. Soviet public pronouncements are not reliable indicators of change in Soviet military doctrine.

Much the same can be said of Soviet arms control activities and positions. Soviet leaders have never hesitated to view and employ arms control as an instrument of military strategy. For example, the current START framework for reducing the long-range strategic arsenals of both parties would not necessarily force the Soviet leadership to fundamentally alter their nuclear warfighting doctrine. The existing START framework would allow the Soviets to modernize their entire nuclear arsenal into the next century and will not prohibit or inhibit significant preemptive counterforce capability. START may well permit the Soviets to maintain or enhance a nuclear warfighting capability at lower aggregate force levels. The number of Soviet nuclear systems may change under START, but Soviet nuclear warfighting doctrine need not.

In summary, pronouncements aimed at Western consumption and arms control posturing cannot be used to support the assertion that Soviet nuclear doctine has shifted away from its traditional emphasis on warfighting. The only reliable indicator of such a fundamental transformation is a major change in Soviet strategic procurement and force structure. Representatives of the intelligence community who appeared before the Defense Policy Panel made it very clear that such indications have not yet been observed, nor are they likely to be in the immediate future. The continued Soviet acquisition of counterforce systems as modern follow-ons to existing systems

has been predicted by the intelligence community for years. The only logical conclusion, based on an assessment of the evidence, is that Soviet nuclear doctrine has not shifted away from superiority and warfighting.

Recognizing the necessary linkage between Soviet nuclear and conventional doctrine, and the fact that Soviet nuclear doctrine continues to be offensively-oriented, discussion in the West over the likelihood or significance of changes in Soviet conventional doctrine may be moot. It is entirely possible that any Soviet conventional doctrine change or force restructuring will reflect the accommodation of offensive, not defensive, requirements. A reduction or reorganization of Soviet and/or Warsaw Pact forces could increase the operational efficiency and effectiveness of the overall force structure. The point is, a conventional doctrine that emphasizes defense would seem to be inconsistent with a nuclear warfighting doctrine stressing counterforce, preemption, and surprise. Consequently, Western leaders should continue to be exceedingly cautious in their approach to Gorbachev's "reform" initiatives, including promises of monumental arms control agreements. While such initiatives must be carefully considered within the context of our own security needs, Western leaders should not venture too far out on a limb in an effort to encourage or accommodate Gorbachev. We should wait for Soviet actions, not words, to demonstrate the degree to which they are serious about change. In the end, no arms control is preferable to bad arms control.

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